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MISTAKEN IDENTITY IN EURIPIDES' *INO*¹

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Until recently, our sole evidence for the plot of Euripides' *Ino* was a tale recorded by Hyginus under the heading *Euripidis Ino* (*Fab.* 4):

*Athamas in Thessalia rex, cum Inonem uxorem, ex qua duos filios
<susceperat>, perisse putaret, duxit nymphe filiam Themistonem uxorem; ex
ea geminos filios procreavit. postea rescit Inonem in Parnaso esse atque
bacchationis causa eo pervenisse. misit qui eam adducerent; quam adductam
celavit. rescit Themisto eam inventam esse, sed quae esset nesciebat. coepit
velle filios eius necare. rei consciam, quam captivam esse credebat, ipsam
Inonem sumpsit; et ei dixit ut filios suos candidis vestimentis operiret, Inonis
filios nigris. Ino suos candidis, Themistonis pullis operuit; tunc Themisto
decepta suos filios occidit. id ubi rescit, ipsa se necavit. Athamas autem in
venatione per insaniam Learchum maiorem filium suum interfecit; at Ino cum
minore filio Melicerte in mare se deiecit et dea est facta.*

When Athamas, king of Thessaly, thought that his wife Ino, by whom he
fathered two sons, had perished, he married Themisto, the daughter of a

¹ It is a pleasure to offer this paper in honour of the memory of Professor Daniel Jakob, who treated me with great kindness on my visits to Thessaloniki, and from whose work I have learned so much. I think in particular of his article on Stesichorus, Jakob (1988), which makes more sense in two pages than others do in hundreds, and of Jakob (1984) 138-42, which analyses a fragment of the play discussed in this paper. – I am grateful to Dr Lyndsay Coe, to Professor David Kovacs, and to Professor Alan Sommerstein for helpful comments.

nymph, and had twin sons by her. Later he discovered that Ino was on Mount Parnassus, where she had gone for the Bacchic revels. He sent someone to bring her home, and concealed her when she had been brought. Themisto discovered that she had been found, but did not know her identity. She began to desire to kill Ino's sons, and made Ino herself, whom she believed to be a captive, a confidante in the plan, telling her to clothe her children with white garments, but Ino's with black. Ino clothed her own with white, and Themisto's with black; then Themisto mistakenly killed her own sons. When she discovered this, she killed herself. Moreover, Athamas, while hunting, in a fit of madness killed his older son Learchus; but Ino with the younger, Melicertes, cast herself into the sea and was made a goddess.

This tale is one of only two which Hyginus explicitly attributes to Euripides. In the case of the other, *Antiope*, a substantial papyrus fragment corroborates Hyginus' assertion; we may thus provisionally accept his claim for *Ino*, too.² The quoted fragments of the play are too sententious to give an indication of the contents of its plot;³ but the recent publication of a new papyrus has greatly increased our knowledge. Its text runs as follows:⁴

² This point is argued at greater length by Finglass 2014, 70-1.

³ Eur. fr. 398-423 *TrGF*, a few of which are mentioned in the discussion below. One of these fragments, however (fr. 398, mentioned at Finglass 2014, 71 with n. 49) should rather be classed among the 'fragmenta incerti dramatis', as G. O. Hutchinson points out to me; see Nauck as cited by Kannicht, and Hutchinson in a forthcoming study of Plutarch's quotations.

⁴ P.Oxy. 5131, edited by Luppe and Henry 2012; their attribution of the fragment to Euripides and to his *Ino* is supported by Finglass 2014. The text in this article is identical to that printed at Finglass 2014, 65, except that in line 4 I write ἡκουῖ['] instead of ἡκουῖ[ι], to give the bisected anapaestic

	<p>] επτε[] ..τ[χαυνα[</p> <hr/> <p>ἄλλη κυνε[— ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞</p> <p>οἶδε γὰρ ἤκουζ[’ ...] .τ[.] .ολ[φοράδην τὴν βαρυδαίμονα[— — 5</p> <p>Κάδμου γενε[.] . [πρὸς δεσπός[υνον δ]ῶμα φέρ[οντες < ∞ ∞ ∞ — ∞ — — > 7a</p> <hr/>
Ἀθάμας β	<p>θέσθ’ ἡκύχ[ως νιν οἱ π]έλας πρὸ δ[ωμάτων μικρὸν μὲν ὑμῖν ἄχθος, ἀλγειν[ὸν δ’ ἐμοί. γυμνοῦτε, δείκνυτ’ εἰς φάος πο[— ∞ — 10</p> <p>μὴ καὶ λεληθῶς ἐν πέπλοισιν[— ∞ —. [—————]</p>
Ἰν[α	<p>] .ε ψυχὰ . . μοχ[.] [[.] . . [. . .] ακι . . [.] ων [.] . . [. ἀ]εικέλιος ὦ ταλαπ[ειρι]ων δύστηνος [15</p> <p>]ελι[τ]ῃ^θ . . . α . . α []αν[.] []ας []ο δυστην[stripped 20</p> <p>] .ν[] .ροφαι[] . . αδες[] . . ωτλαςτ[</p>

dimeter typical of Euripides. In line 9 we might consider <c>μικρόν instead of μικρόν, again to give better Euripidean orthography (see Finglass 2007, on Soph. *El.* 1113). Both these changes are suggested in Kovacs forthcoming, which offers further textual analysis of the piece.

]ηçαç[[εκ]]^{ov} .[

25

] [

]ματω .[

] .ονω .[

[End of song by chorus. Attendants carrying Learchus' body are observed entering via an eisodos.]

CHORUS Another . . .

For these men have come . . .

aloft the ill-fated . . .

of Cadmus . . .

carrying to the master's house.

[Attendants carrying Learchus' body arrive on stage.]

ATHAMAS Place him gently in front of the house, bystanders,

a weight small for you, but painful for me.

Strip him, show him to the light . . .

so that not escaping notice in robes . . .

[Attendants place Learchus' body on the stage and remove the robe that was covering him.]

INO (*sings*) . . . soul . . .

. . .

. . . terrible, o wretched

. . . unhappy

This chapter considers the play afresh in the light of this new evidence; what sort of drama was this, and how did its themes and characters compare to those in other

tragedies? By offering this kind of thematic analysis here, after the inevitably philological focus of my earlier piece on the play, I hope to position this still relatively neglected drama within Euripides' oeuvre, and to highlight particularly important and distinctive aspects of its dramaturgy.

The papyrus permits the following deductions about the story.⁵ Towards the end of the play, immediately after a choral ode, the boy Learchus is carried on stage, dead; after brief remarks from his father Athamas, his mother Ino sings a lament over the body. The news of the boy's death had already reached the house, perhaps via Athamas himself; but the choral ode that preceded the arrival of the corpse was devoted to mourning for some other tragic event that had struck the family. We know from Hyginus that Ino subsequently cast herself into the sea together with her other son, Melicertes; she, and perhaps her son too, became a divinity, and this fact, together with the narration of their watery leap, which could not be represented on stage, would have been communicated by a *deus ex machina* at the conclusion of the play. Ino may have been overcome by madness when she jumped into the sea with Melicertes, as she is described in the brief reference to her in Euripides' *Medea*;⁶ this would balance Athamas' madness, which also led to the death of a child.⁷

⁵ These points are all argued for in one or other of the works cited in the previous footnote, which also contain detailed bibliography.

⁶ Eur. *Med.* 1282-9 μίαν δὲ κλύω μίαν τῶν πάρος | γυναιῖκ' ἐν φίλοις χέρα βαλεῖν τέκνοις, | Ἰνώ μανεῖσαν ἐκ θεῶν, ὅθ' ἡ Διὸς | δάμαρ νιν ἐξέπεμπε δωμάτων ἄλαις· | πίτνει δ' ἅ τάλαιν' ἐς ἄλμαν φόνωι | τέκνων δυσσεβεῖ, | ἀκτῆς ὑπερτείνασα ποντίας πόδα, | δυοῖν τε παιδοῖν ξυνθανοῦσ' ἀπόλλυται. For this passage see Newton 1985, although his conclusion, that the chorus's unique version of the myth, in which Ino kills both of her children, is meant to be understood as objectively false by the audience, does not take account of the malleability of paradigmatic myth in the hands of the tragedians.

⁷ Cf. Euripides' *Heracles*, where madness sent by Hera causes Heracles to kill his own children.

The final part of the drama thus portrays the traumatic ends of two children and of their mother. The suffering that this caused would have been ameliorated in part if Melicertes underwent an apotheosis, but the prevailing emotions are nevertheless likely to have been grief and loss – Athamas, in particular, has to live on bereft of his close kin – and the *deus ex machina* will hardly have brought everything to a wholly agreeable conclusion.⁸ We already knew, thanks to Hyginus, that he was robbed of all four of his sons; what we did not know, until the publication of the papyrus, was that the deaths of his sons by Ino were spaced out across the final scenes. Learchus’ killing has already taken place, and been announced, before a choral stasimon, which might well not even be the last stasimon of the drama; Learchus’ body is subsequently brought on stage, and lamented by his mother in a song that would have provided a moment of high pathos. The death of Melicertes then constitutes a separate incident, not, as in many other accounts of the myth,⁹ part of an instantaneous reaction by Ino to news of Learchus’ death, prompted by the fear that her still maddened husband might kill her other son.

By separating these events Euripides gives Athamas, and particularly Ino, the opportunity to mourn Learchus’ death; his end thus has an impact on the spectators in its own right, before being succeeded by the further tragedy of Ino and Melicertes. For Athamas to mourn his son requires his return to sanity after killing his child. This is a further essential point in Euripides’ handling of the drama, one not apparent from Hyginus’ summary, but which can be inferred from the papyrus; we may compare how Agave in *Bacchae*, and the title character in *Heracles*, recover their faculties only

⁸ See Garvie 2014, 36-8 on the failure of many Euripidean *dei ex machina* to resolve all the moral questions thrown up by their respective dramas.

⁹ For references see Newton 1985, 500 n. 9.

to have to confront the killings of their own children which they had perpetrated during their madness. The brevity of Athamas' expression of sorrow in the papyrus fragment suggests that he has already lamented his son's end at greater length (a mere four trimeters seems insufficient to mourn such a tragic event); he might also participate to some extent in his wife's mournful lyric. It is frustrating that the papyrus breaks off before we can appreciate the power of Ino's song, but at least we see that she did sing, marking this point in the play as especially fraught. And since Ino, and probably Melicertes, will receive the consolation of apotheosis, pausing on Learchus' fate directly confronts the audience with what, for the play's eponymous heroine, will have been the single most tragic event of the play.

The emotional force resulting from children's deaths at the hands of a parent was used to famous effect by Euripides at the conclusion of his *Medea*; the eponymous character in that play became so much the child-killer *par excellence* that Horace could describe the convention that violent acts leading to death were not represented on the tragic stage via the admonition 'let Medea not kill her children in front of the spectators'.¹⁰ But *Ino* was arguably more dominated by child-killing than even *Medea*; in our play, at least four children met their ends, at the hands of no fewer than three different parents. And unlike those in *Medea*, the child-killings in *Ino* were all to some degree unintentional, and took place not just at the end of the drama, but in its earlier stages too. This latter fact sets *Ino* apart even from plays such as *Bacchae* and *Heracles* which, as mentioned above, involve only a single act of child-killing.¹¹

As we know from Hyginus, Athamas' other wife, Themisto, attempted to kill Ino's children, but by taking the disguised Ino into her confidence ensured the

¹⁰ Hor. *AP* 185 *ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet*.

¹¹ For the killing of children by their parents as a motif in tragedy see McHardy 2005.

ruination of her plan: Ino brought it about that Themisto killed her own children instead. The mistaken killing of children by their parents thus seems to have formed the backbone of the drama; and this failure of parents, first of Themisto, and then of Athamas, to recognise their own offspring was accompanied by the failure of Themisto to recognise Ino, the woman whose offspring she wished to kill. One family member not recognising another, leading to the prospect of an unintentional act of kin-killing, is a feature fundamental to several tragedies from across Euripides' career.¹² So in his *Aegeus* Medea probably attempted to have Theseus killed by his father Aegeus, who was unaware of the young man's true identity. *Alexandros* saw the Trojan prince Paris nearly murdered by his mother and brothers when, as an unknown stranger, he defeated the latter in the games instituted to commemorate his own supposed death as a child. The title character of *Ion* is nearly killed by his mother because she suspects him of being her husband's lovechild; the title character of *Cresphontes* almost meets with a similar fate, when he returns home claiming to be Cresphontes' killer and thus provokes his mother's grief.

These plays all delay the recognition of one family member by another in order to bring the plot to the point of disaster; the audience thus experiences terror as they anticipate a dreadful, unintentional crime, followed by the drama of the moment

¹² Karamanou 2011 believes that although 'near-catastrophic events between close kin occurred sporadically in earlier Euripidean plays . . . [this plot type] develops into a trend with the wide production of "family reunion" plays [from c. 415 until 406]' (pp. 244-5; cf. p. 241). But the surviving plays of Euripides for which we have a firm date (approximately 60 out of 81 surviving titles) are already dominated by plays from the last twenty years of his life (fully 45 out of 60; see Finglass 2011, 3 n. 12), so it is not surprising to find more plays that deal with this plot pattern from the end of Euripides' career than from its beginning. Ino, at least was not a late play, having been produced some time between 455 and 426 inclusive (see Finglass 2014, 70 n. 35).

of recognition, the relief that the killing will not in fact take place, and the excitement caused by the characters' reactions to the very different situation in which they now find themselves. In *Ino*, by contrast, the failure to recognise family members leads not merely to the brink of disaster, but past it; and this happens not once, but twice.¹³ A similar pattern might have been found in Euripides' *Plisthenes*, if some scholars are right to reconstruct its plot on the basis of a tale in Hyginus; in that story, Atreus kills his own son Plisthenes thinking that he was his brother's son. It is quite uncertain that this account in Hyginus goes back to Euripides, however,¹⁴ so we cannot use it as a safe parallel. Killings by people who fail to recognise their kin are attested for Astydamos' *Alcmaeon* and a play called *Odysseus Wounded* unasccribed to any dramatist, but we know nothing about these plays other than that the killing took place within the timeframe of the drama itself.¹⁵ A further parallel is found in Sophocles'

¹³ The contrast between different sorts of kin-killings is a key concern for Aristotle in his *Poetics* (chapter 14, 1453b14-1454a.13). He describes kin-killings that are (i) committed with the full knowledge of the perpetrators; (ii) begun, but not completed, by people who knew that their targets were their kin; (iii) carried out when the perpetrators were unaware that they were killing their own kin; (iv) begun, but not completed, by people who did not know that their targets were their kin. Aristotle rates (ii) the worst, (i) the next best, (iii), which corresponds to what happens in *Ino*, the next best (βέλτιον δὲ τὸ ἀγνοοῦντα μὲν πράξει, πράξαντα δὲ ἀναγνώρισαι· τό τε γὰρ μίαιρον οὐ πρόσεστιν καὶ ἡ ἀναγνώρισις ἐκπληκτικόν, 'a superior arrangement is where the agent acts in ignorance, and discovers the truth after acting: for here there is nothing repulsive, and the recognition produces a powerful effect', translated by Halliwell 1987, 47), and (iv) the best, describing it as κράτιστον. We are not bound to adopt his preferences, nor were the audiences of the fifth century. For recent bibliography on this passage of Aristotle see Karamanou 2011, 244 n. 9.

¹⁴ See Collard and Cropp 2008, II 80.

¹⁵ Both the Astydamos fragment (*TrGF* I 60 F 1b) and the *Odysseus Wounded* fragment are both cited by Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453b29-34, who contrasts them with the handling of the Laius' death in

Euryalus, in which the title character, Odysseus' son by Euippe, daughter of Tyrimmas, king of Epirus, comes to Ithaca to meet his father. Odysseus is away when he arrives, and Penelope, on his return, tells him that the new arrival is planning to kill him; so Odysseus kills him himself, without knowing his identity.¹⁶ As in *Ino*, here we have a failure of recognition that arises from the separation of family members. Another comparison involves Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, which is centered around the discovery that the title character, years before the action of the play, unknowingly killed his father. The theme of failed recognition is strong in that drama, with Jocasta failing to recognise the son whom she married, and Oedipus failing to recognise, until the end, all the indications that point to him as the killer. The effect of *Ino* would have been quite different, however, in that the failed recognitions take place during the play's action, on the same day, and their consequences are presented to the spectators almost in real time. The very fact that there are several failed recognitions, leading to separate deaths of innocent children, ensures the special prominence of the motif.

Themisto's desire to kill Ino's children seems to have been prompted by the jealousy typical of a stepmother, or of a woman who perceives another as a sexual

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. The play that Aristotle calls *Odysseus Wounded* may be the same as Sophocles' play *Odysseus struck by a Spine* (thus Nauck 1856, 182-3 = 1889, 230; Radt, *TrGF* IV 375 attributes the suggestion to Brunck, but I could not find it under either of the relevant titles in Brunck's edition of 1786 or the reprint of 1789). Whether or not that identification is correct, the appearance of the motif in a play by the fourth-century poet Astydamos suggests that it remained popular among the audiences of tragedy.

¹⁶ See Radt, *TrGF* IV 194-5.

rival.¹⁷ The news that Ino had been discovered alive threatened her position as Athamas' spouse, a threat all the more dangerous while Ino's children still lived; with those children dead, however, it would be harder for Ino to displace her, since she would no longer have heirs to offer her former husband. So too in *Medea* Medea's hatred of Jason for abandoning her in favour of a new bride is what leads to the tragic dénouement, although her decision to kill her own children is a particularly horrific variation on the vindictive acts that the audience might have expected in such a context.¹⁸ Jealousy of one woman for another lies at the heart of *Andromache*, where Neoptolemus' wife Hermione hates the enslaved Andromache for having borne her husband a child, and, together with her father Menelaus, attempts to kill both her rival and her rival's son. In the *Phrixus* plays Ino herself plots against her step-children Phrixus and Helle, who are rescued only thanks to the intervention of their divine mother Nephele.¹⁹ We encounter a further variation in *Alcmeon in Corinth*, where Merope, wife of Creon, with whom Alcmeon had lodged his two children, Amphilocheus and Tisiphone, grows jealous of Tisiphone's beauty and sells her into slavery. The jealous woman rarely triumphs in this kind of play (*Medea* as often being an exception), and that is the case in *Ino* too. Where *Ino* is distinctive is in the paradox that the jealous Themisto turns for assistance to the woman whose potential influence she wishes to check. Themisto's failure to recognise Ino thus inadvertently dooms her plan; her subsequent failure to recognise her children leads to outright catastrophe.

¹⁷ Eur. fr. 400 *TrGF*, which refers to love (Κύπρις) as an illness experienced by 'us women', and fr. 403, an attack on φθόνος, may be connected with this theme. For a list of tragedies which deal with this familiar motif see Watson 1995, 20 n. 2, Foley 2001, 85.

¹⁸ For modern parallels for Medea's action see Mossman 2011, 1-3.

¹⁹ For this myth in tragedy and elsewhere see Watson 1995, 247-51, Fowler, *EGM* II 195-201.

A play particularly similar to *Ino*, and not just in connexion with the theme of jealousy, was Euripides' *Captive Melanippe*, in which Melanippe's sons were adopted by Metapontus, founder and king of Metapontium. The queen becomes jealous (presumably fearing that her own offspring would end up disinherited) and plotted with her brothers to kill them; but the boys escape, and the queen's brothers are the ones who die.²⁰ Here the motif of the jealous stepmother is combined with that of the plan which recoils onto the head of its originator. This pattern of recoiling jealousy is found in Pherecydes' account of Aedon, daughter of Pandareos and wife of Zethos, who kills her child Itylus by mistake at night, having intended to kill one of the children of Zethos' brother Amphion; she was jealous that Amphion's wife had produced six children, whereas she herself had managed only two.²¹ Sophocles' *Trachiniae* provides a better-known example: Deianira's attempt to win back the love of her husband (a milder version of the jealousy seen in the other myths), by sending him a robe doused in what she thinks is a love-potion, ends in disaster when the potion turns out to be a deadly poison. What appears an ingenious plan turns out to have dire consequences for its originator; although in this case, at least, there is no

²⁰ See Collard and Cropp 2008, I 587-8. A different story, found in Hyginus (*Fab.* 186) and perhaps reflecting a tragic original, has the queen (called Theano) encourage her sons to kill her stepsons while they are out on a hunt; but Theano's children are the ones who perish, and Theano consequently commits suicide.

²¹ Pher. Ath. fr. 124 *EGM*, compared with the Ino/Themisto myth by Sourvinou-Inwood (1990) 410; see further Fowler, *EGM* II 365-6, Hansen 2002, 301-5 ('Ogre kills his own children'). According to Robert (1920-6) II/1 49 n. 4, Euripides took Pherecydes' story as a model for his play, but it is more prudent to see them as largely independent manifestations of the same story pattern. Russo *ap.* Russo *et al.* (1992) on *Od.* 19.518-24 suggests that the story in Pherecydes was invented on the basis of the brief account in the *Odyssey*.

malice on her part.²² The same pattern of a plot that recoils can be identified elsewhere in tragedy too. In Euripides' *Archelaus* the title character is set a task by Cisseus, king of Thrace; when he completes his mission, Cisseus attempts to kill him by throwing him into a fiery pit, but he is warned by a slave and manages to cast Cisseus there in his stead.²³ A more distant parallel is found in Sophocles' *Electra*, where Orestes' plan, to take Clytemnestra unawares by bringing a false report of his own death, causes immense, unintended suffering to his sister; that play too involves a failure of recognition, with Orestes at first not identifying his sister when he arrives with the urn that supposedly contains his ashes, thus unintentionally allowing her torment to continue. *Ino* is particularly remarkable among these dramas in that the plotting stepmother, Themisto, loses out 'through the counter-machinations of another stepmother, Ino'.²⁴

The mechanism of Themisto's scheme, having the doomed children dressed in dark robes, makes use of a distinction in the colour of costume attested elsewhere in

²² Cf. Goldhill (2003) 167 'for all that Erôs is thematised in this drama, and for all that erotically motivated revenge and intrigue are central to the plotting, it would be misplaced to describe the *Trachiniae* as a drama of jealousy or even spite'; Sanders (2014) 148 'she does not wish to destroy Iole, or even to damage her, but she does recognize her as a rival she has to beat, and it is this that makes her willing to adopt such unorthodox, and potentially dangerous, methods.' In epic versions of the story Deianira (whose name could mean 'man-destroyer') may have known about the robe's deadly power when she sent it to Heracles, intending to punish him for his infidelity (cf. [Hes.] fr. 25.20-5 M-W).

²³ See Collard and Cropp 2008, I 230-1. Their reconstruction leans on a tale in Hyginus not explicitly attributed to Euripides; but the tale appears to have been taken from a tragedy, and seems consistent with several fragments of the play.

²⁴ Watson 1995, 45 n. 95.

tragedy.²⁵ Dark clothes are associated with mourning,²⁶ bright clothes with celebration;²⁷ the change from bright or normal clothing to dark robes in response to some trauma is sometimes explicitly mentioned.²⁸ Themisto's fatal confusion thanks to the exchange of garments can be paralleled by Aegeus' suicide as a result of his son, Theseus, returning from Crete with black rather than white (or red) sails; this story seems to have been told in Simonides, although it is otherwise not attested, in tragedy or elsewhere, before the Hellenistic period.²⁹ More generally, costume seems to have played quite a role in *Ino*: as well as the garments used to clothe or cover the children (whether or not either of the pairs of children actually appeared on stage in this garb), Ino herself (at least at the beginning) will have been dressed in the rags that pertain to a servant, Themisto in the finery of a queen.³⁰ This is not merely an

²⁵ This aspect of the play suggested to Zieliński 1929, 134 that the killings took place by night, since otherwise the mother would have recognised her offspring, and that the children therefore slept in the same chamber. If so (cf. Aedon's mistaken killing of her son at night in Pherecydes), this would add to the horror: children who themselves were close to each other were tragically divided by the hostility of their mothers, and their deaths took place against the suitably grim backdrop of the darkness.

According to Webster 1967, 100, by contrast, Themisto arranges for Ino's children to be sacrificed; but (i) as Webster himself notes, black garments are not elsewhere associated with sacrificial victims, (ii) the children could still be identified at a sacrifice, unless they were hooded, and (iii) it is not very likely that Themisto could have organised an impromptu sacrifice of this kind.

²⁶ Cf. Aesch. *Cho.* 10-12, Eur. *Alc.* 425-7, *Phoen.* 325-6, 371-3, *Or.* 456-8.

²⁷ Cf. Aesch. *Eum.* 352, Eur. *Phoen.* 324.

²⁸ So at Eur. *Alc.* 922-4 Admetus laments νῦν δ' ὑμεναίων γόος ἀντίπαλος | λευκῶν τε πέπλων μέλανες στολμοὶ | πέμπουσὶ μ' ἔσω; cf. 215-17, *Hel.* 1087-8, 1186-7.

²⁹ Simonides fr. 242a Poltera; for Hellenistic and later sources for Aegeus' suicide see Fowler, *EGM* II 68.

³⁰ 'Incipiente actione Themistonem regio ornatu incedere, Inonem vero thapsino faciei colore, pannis semilaceris indutam inter humillimas eius ancillas videmus' (Zieliński 1929, 133). Compare the

inference from Hyginus' plot summary (although it would be a legitimate one if it were): the rags worn by Euripides' Ino are highlighted by Aristophanes in his *Acharnians*, as is her palour in the same playwright's *Wasps*.³¹ Fabric or clothing is thus involved in two separate failures of recognition within the drama. To Aristophanes' mockery Euripides could reply that his Ino had good Homeric precedent: Athena makes Odysseus unrecognisable by changing his physical appearance and clothing him in wretched garments, when he returns home after a long absence to reclaim his rightful position in his house.³² After Themisto's death, it is possible that Ino changed her clothes for queenly garments, to symbolise her regained status as Athamas' wife;³³ if so, her change to a more fortunate state will have been brief, as the death of her son Learchus would follow not long after.

It is a matter of central importance for the play that there are multiple failures of recognition, multiple killings of children by their parents. The repetition of these motifs ensures that they lie at the heart of the drama, and that the spectators will have made connexions between them. Exactly how Euripides handled these connexions,

contrast between the slave Andromache and the royal Hermione, another pair of female rivals for the same man, in Euripides' *Andromache* (cf. especially 147-53); also the contrast between the appearance of Sophocles' Electra and that of Chrysothemis and Clytemnestra (cf. especially 190-1, 664, 1177-89, and Finglass 2007, on 324 and 516), and the second entrance of the Queen in Aeschylus' *Persae*, without the royal finery that she wore on her first appearance (cf. 607-9).

³¹ Eur. *Ino* testt. iia, iib *TrGF* (= Ar. *Ach.* 432-4, *Vesp.* 1412-14). For Euripidean characters dressed in rags see Muecke 1982.

³² Hom. *Od.* 13.397-403, 429-38.

³³ The reverse occurs in Euripides' *Andromache* (830-5), where Hermione's fall is symbolised by the removal of her finery (cf. Finglass 2009, 275-6: 'Previously the elaborate coverings of her head and body . . . had symbolised her status and her consequent right to express herself as she wished (149-53). Their public removal is a telling sign of the reversal of her fortunes').

however, is one of the great unknowns of the play. Was the death of Learchus in some sense a punishment for Ino's involvement in the deaths of Themisto's children?³⁴ If so, Ino indirectly causes two different acts of infanticide even before she leaps into the sea with Melicertes. Hyginus moves from one set of killings to the other via the laconic *autem*, which does not help. Some explicit connexion might have been drawn between the two acts of filicide; even if it was not, the structure of the drama would have made it impossible for the audience not to compare them. But a master tragedian could have shaped the audience's response in ways that go beyond mere plotting. Compare how, say, the figure of Clytemnestra receives such distinct portrayals, and such differing levels of sympathy, in different dramas, even though the basic details of the plot (she kills her husband and mistreats her surviving children) remain unchanged.³⁵

Our sources do not allow us to make any comment for certain about Ino's attitude to the killings of Themisto's children, or about the level of moral responsibility for those killings that the spectators were encouraged to attribute to her. But we can say at least that this was probably a fundamental issue in the drama. Themisto is likely to have been a much less interesting, more conventionally wicked character: a jealous woman who attempts to kill her rival's children, and kills herself

³⁴ Cf. Zieliński 1929, 140: 'totus ethicus tragoediae sensus in hac una scena positus erat, ex qua tamen nihil nobis servatum esse dolemus. Accepitne Learchi mortem Ino ut iustam commeritae noxae poenam?'

³⁵ Ino's afflictions may also have been caused by Hera's anger against her for having brought up the infant Dionysus (cf. Eur. *Med.* 1282-9, cited above, n. 6, where the cause of Hera's antipathy is not stated, Pher. Ath. fr. 90c *EGM*, Ov. *Met.* 3.313-15, 4.416-31, Henrichs 1978, 140-1 with nn. 61-2, Fowler, *EGM* II 372-3). Ino's association with Dionysus may have been part of the play's back-story, since according to Hyginus she had gone into the wilderness to celebrate Bacchic revels.

when she kills her own by mistake. Ino, by contrast, became involved in the deaths of Themisto's children only in order to save her own. But did she at least regret their deaths? Or did she display indifference or even triumph over their fate, since their killing involved not only the punishment of the woman who had attempted to kill her own offspring, but also the removal of potential rivals for her children's inheritance? Might Euripides even have raised the possibility that Ino could have saved her own children without substituting Themisto's? The answer to the last of these questions is likely to be 'no' (the substitution looks like an essentially defensive tactic, not an offensive one), but as for the others, we cannot tell for sure. We can at least say that her response will have had a major impact on how the audience reacted to her song of grief for her dead son Learchus.³⁶

A fragment cited by Plutarch seems to shed light on this question, although in the end it is not as illuminating as we might have hoped:³⁷

οἱ πονηροὶ τὴν κακίαν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς διορῶντες ἀνθ' ἡδονῆς μὲν εὐθὺς κενὴν
 χάριν ἐχούσης ἐλπίδος ἔρημον εὐρίσκουσι, φόβων δὲ καὶ λυπῶν καὶ
 μνήμης ἀτερποῦς καὶ πρὸς μὲν τὸ μέλλον ὑποψίας ἀπιστίας δὲ πρὸς τὸ
 παρὸν αἰεὶ γέμουσαν· ὥσπερ τῆς Ἰνοῦς ἀκούομεν ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις
 λεγούσης, ἐφ' οἷς ἔδρασε μεταμελομένης,

φίλοι γυναῖκες, πῶς ἂν ἐξ ἀρχῆς δόμους
 Ἀθάμαντος οἰκῆσαιμι τῶν πεπραγμένων
 δράσασα μηδέν; (Eur. fr. 399 *TrGF*)

ταῦθ' <εἰκὸς> ἐκάστου τῶν πονηρῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀναπολεῖν ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ
 διαλογίζεσθαι, πῶς ἂν ἐκβᾶσα τῆς μνήμης τῶν ἀδικημάτων καὶ τὸ

³⁶ Cf. Watson 1995, 37 n. 67: 'It is still possible . . . that a stepmother such as Sidero or Ino was presented not merely as a stock villain and that an attempt at characterisation was made which might have included an exploration of the motives that led these women to plan the deaths of their stepsons.'

³⁷ Plut. *De sera numinis vindicta* 555a-556a.

συνειδὸς ἐξ ἑαυτῆς ἐκβαλοῦσα καὶ καθαρὰ γενομένη βίον ἄλλον ἐξ ἀρχῆς
βιώσειεν.

Wicked people, when they contemplate their own wickedness, find that
instead of pleasure, which gives only a short and empty delight, it is void of
hope, and always weighed down with fears, sorrows, joyless memories,
suspicions of the future, and distrust of the present. So we hear the words of
Ino in the theatres, in regret for what she had done:

Dear women, tell me, how I wish I could dwell in the house of
Athamas from the beginning, having done none of the things that I
have done!

It is reasonable to believe that the soul of every wicked person turns these
things over and reasons within itself, how by escaping from the memory of
former transgressions, and casting from itself its consciousness and becoming
pure, it might live another life from the beginning.

The fragment was attributed to Euripides' *Ino* by Valckenaer,³⁸ rightly. Plutarch
quotes Euripides more than twice as often as he does Sophocles,³⁹ and cites this very
play three times elsewhere;⁴⁰ the reference to performance (ὥσπερ τῆς Ἰνου
ἀκούομεν ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις λεγούσης) suits a play which we know was performed

³⁸ Valckenaer 1767, 173.

³⁹ 359 times (more than any other author except for Plato – 915 – and Homer – 889) versus 140
(figures from Morgan 1998, 318-19; for the indirect tradition of Euripides more generally see Morgan
2003, 197-200, Finglass 2016).

⁴⁰ Eur. fr. 411, 412, 413 *TrGF*; see Di Gregorio 1980, 59-60.

during the Imperial period;⁴¹ Euripides' *Ino* had a chorus of women (φίλοι γυναῖκες). The passage provides a tantalising glimpse into our drama, with both Ino's words and Plutarch's introduction to them referring to Ino's regret for her actions. Unfortunately, we are not told what these actions were. If the passage came from early on in the play,⁴² the actions in question might be her treatment of Phrixus and Helle; but we might wonder whether that part of the myth existed for the purpose of this play, since if Ino had been established as a wicked stepmother before the drama began then Athamas' decision to bring her back into his house would be inexplicable.⁴³ Ino's words might refer instead to her involvement in the deaths of Themisto's children,⁴⁴ either when those deaths were still the most recent to afflict the house, or after Learchus' death had also become apparent; if the latter, the speech could have taken place before the text preserved on the papyrus (before the choral ode with which the papyrus begins), or after it (in a speech following her song). Too much is uncertain here for us to place much weight on this fragment, but at least it tells us that Ino did feel regret during the play for something that she had done.

So far I have been arguing, largely on *a priori* grounds rather than from hard evidence, that the Themisto episode must have remained important in the final part of

⁴¹ See the final paragraph, below.

⁴² Thus Welcker 1839-41, II 619.

⁴³ Plutarch cites the passage in the context of a wrongdoer's concern for offences committed in the past, which might be thought to support that idea that Ino is referring to her actions from before the play began. But his main interest in the lines may have been Ino's wish to live her life with Athamas again from the beginning; this may have provided such a good parallel with what he wanted to say about the guilty person's conscience that he may not have been concerned with how far in the past lay the actions for which Ino was expressing regret.

⁴⁴ Thus Webster 1967, 100.

the play, and that it had an impact on how the audience viewed Ino in the later scenes. Hard evidence for this play is not easy to come by; but the papyrus may provide a hint that this hypothesis is correct. At the start of the anapaests that mark the transition from the choral song to the episode that follows, the chorus appear to declare ‘Another sorrow has struck this house’, or something of this kind; only half the line is preserved, including the crucial ἄλλη, but the overall sense seems clear.⁴⁵ This implies that the chorus have been singing about a different topic in the ode, and not about the death of Learchus. On the other hand, their relatively restrained, or at least unsurprised, reaction to the entry of Learchus’ body indicates that his death has previously been announced, perhaps by Athamas himself, who would therefore have arrived beforehand without the body. What other sorrowful topic relating to the house could have been the subject of song apart from the death of Themisto’s children? Any lesser grief would have been a curious focus when news of a child’s death had recently been announced; the very designation of Learchus’ end as ‘another sorrow’ implies some sort of equivalence between the two events, without which the transition would feel emotionally unsatisfying. And although those children and Learchus had different, hostile mothers, they shared the same father in Athamas. Themisto’s death is a less probable topic, since she was guilty of child-killing and unlikely to be the subject of mournful reflection in her own right. Moreover, to move from her death, which, after all, was a kind of self-punishment for her murders of her children, to the death of the innocent Learchus via the phrase ‘another sorrow has struck this house’ would be surprising, perhaps grotesque. Nevertheless, it cannot be altogether ruled out.

⁴⁵ See Finglass 2014, 72-3.

If the above reasoning is correct, this single, precious word ἄλλη allows us to see how the drama was patterned around an intricate structure of infanticide. Even after Learchus' end has been announced, the chorus still devote a song to the deaths of Themisto's children; and at the arrival of Learchus' body, they connect their deaths with his, at least on the level of seeing them as successive sorrows that afflict the house of Athamas. This is of interest in purely structural terms – evidently the play was no mere diptych. But it also suggests that the play developed and exploited a connexion between the child killings that so dominate the drama. This connexion could have been taken up by Ino in the song that followed; even if it was not, the idea of the link had already been planted in the audience's minds and would have been present as she sang.

The figure of Athamas himself is likely to have been particularly important in this context. When he (probably) returns with the news of Learchus' death, three of his children are dead, two at Themisto's hands, one at his own. It is possible that he is unaware of the deaths of Themisto's children when he returns to announce the killing of Learchus. The latter takes place during a hunt,⁴⁶ and it would be a heartless person who went hunting after learning of the deaths of two of his children. On the other hand, Learchus must have been present in the palace when Themisto kills her children, since Ino saves her own children not by sending them away, but by covering them in white garments. It nevertheless would have been possible for Athamas to go hunting with his son after the killing of Themisto's children, but before those deaths

⁴⁶ For the killing of a child during a hunt in tragedy cf. Sophocles' *Niobe* (see the hypothesis at *TrGF* iv pp. 757-8, more easily read at Lloyd-Jones 2003, 228-30), where Niobe's fatal boast takes place as or just after she sends her sons out hunting; they presumably die during that expedition, leaving their sisters to perish at home.

had been announced; or for Learchus, presumably still unaware of the killings of his half-siblings, to leave the palace to join his father who was already out on a hunt. So Athamas may have returned with the terrible news that he had killed his son, only to learn that two more of his children had also perished at a parent's hands.

This is speculation, and could be mistaken. What is certain is that the impact of these deaths on Athamas would have been an important and distinct part of the play. Themisto and Ino would naturally have been affected by the deaths of their own children. As noted above, Ino may or may not have been affected by regret or sorrow for her involvement in the killing of Themisto's offspring; but if she was so affected, this would have been a quite different emotion, and a much milder one, than she felt at the death of her own child. Only Athamas experiences the full force of all acts of child-killing, with a marked intensification in Learchus' death since the boy died at his hand. Even Melicertes' probable apotheosis would have been a poor consolation, representing as it did the disappearance of his final offspring. The man who began the play with (in effect) two wives and two pairs of children ends it with none of either.⁴⁷

Such a fate recalls that of Jason in Euripides' *Medea*, who begins that drama with a pair of wives, and two children by his first wife; by the end he has lost them all, although unlike Athamas, he had only one set of children to lose. Euripides himself noted the similarity between the myths: the chorus in *Medea* cite Ino as the

⁴⁷ In the light of this I cannot accept the view of Watson 1995, 37 that 'In plays where the stepmother appears in her classic guise, such as . . . *Ino* . . . , it is always the suffering stepchild who is the principal character of the drama.' In this case there are four stepchildren who suffer, yet it is unlikely that they all featured as speaking characters, and it is more than possible that only one, or none, of them did; and however many spoke, it is unlikely that they were given the capacity to express their grief in a manner more profound than that of Ino and Athamas.

sole possible parallel for a woman who killed her own children.⁴⁸ But Jason is not especially interesting as a character in his own right – his self-interested moral choices and arrogant attempts at self-justification render him quite unsympathetic. By contrast, Athamas had married his second wife while under the impression that his first had died, and the trouble begins when he attempts, however mistakenly, to deal with the consequences of that innocent error. He is thus likely to have been a more nuanced figure than the despicable Jason.

It is worth looking more closely at the beginning of Hyginus' summary in our tentative assessment of Athamas' role. According to Hyginus, Athamas was himself the prime mover in bringing back Ino into his house and hiding her. His motives for doing so are not stated, nor are we told what his long-term plans were. Did he intend to displace Themisto in favour of Ino, or did he believe that Ino could be kept indefinitely at his house disguised as a servant? Did he advise her on the disguise, something that would have seemed a good idea at the time, but which will have led directly to the catastrophic loss of his children? Again, we cannot tell. But we do have enough of the story to see that Athamas' decisions first to bring Ino back, and then to conceal her identity, indirectly result in the death of his children by Themisto. He is not morally responsible for this terrible outcome, but has nevertheless unknowingly set in motion the circumstances that will culminate in disaster.

Moreover, his decision to bring back a former wife into his house, when his current wife was still living there, might be thought questionable, even foolish.⁴⁹ We may be reminded again of Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, where Heracles has his new love

⁴⁸ Eur. *Med.* 1282-9 (cited above, n. 6).

⁴⁹ For the problems that arise in tragedy from a second sexual union on the part of a man see Seaford 1990, 168-71.

Iole brought into the house that he still shares with his wife Deianira. Heracles' herald Lichas attempts (in vain) to conceal Iole's identity from Deianira, later clarifying that this attempt was made on his own initiative, not on Heracles' orders (*Tr.* 479-83). This pattern is also found in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, where the title character brings back a new lover, Cassandra, into his house, who will herself be killed by his wife Clytemnestra.⁵⁰ But as we noted above in connexion with Euripides' *Medea*, the woman whom Athamas imports is a former wife whom he had thought dead, not a new lover; his action is not morally reprehensible in the way that Heracles' or Agamemnon's is, and indeed to have left Ino in the wilderness might itself have seemed callous. Athamas' action, though perhaps forced on him from a moral point of view, is nevertheless full of risk, since he might reasonably have anticipated that the two women, both married to the same man, and both with children by him, were unlikely to have seen eye to eye; and his attempt to counter that by disguising Ino seems at best an inadequate safeguard. His response to the deaths of his children by Themisto may thus have involved self-reproach for his foolishness, if not for actual guilt. These deaths are then succeeded by another which involves Athamas more directly, and which will have led to further self-reproach on his part, even if again he is not morally responsible for the killing, this time on the grounds of temporary insanity. Such connexions help to structure the drama, and, more importantly, make Athamas into a morally interesting character. He is not simply a man affected by

⁵⁰ For the close associations between *Trachiniae* and *Agamemnon* (and indeed the *Oresteia*) see Easterling 1982, 21-2 and Coe 2013, 358-60 (who argues that the same model may have been employed, *mutatis mutandis*, in Sophocles' *Tereus*). In *Trachiniae* (and possibly *Tereus*) the new woman introduced into the house is in disguise, like Ino, whereas Agamemnon brings Cassandra back home openly.

temporary madness who kills his child; his own decisions, however well-intentioned, bring ruin on himself and his family.⁵¹

The little evidence that we have suggests that Euripides' *Ino* enjoyed considerable popularity in antiquity. We have references to actual performances in Plutarch and in Philostratus;⁵² the papyrus fragment shows that the play was still being read, and quite possibly performed, at Oxyrhynchus in the third century;⁵³ many quotations of the work entered the gnomological tradition; and even Horace's line 'let Medea be fierce and unconquerable, let Ino be tearful' may have been prompted by the central character of our play.⁵⁴ We are doubly unlucky that it was not preserved: unlucky that what seems to have been one of the better-known plays did not make it into the selection of dramas that survived antiquity, and unlucky that a play whose title begins with iota nevertheless failed to be included among the alphabetic plays ('Ιῶν survived, but not 'Ινῶ).⁵⁵ But thanks both to Hyginus' summary and to the remarkable new find from Oxyrhynchus, we can begin to discern just a hint of why this sophisticated and exciting drama continued to cast its spell on spectators centuries after its first performance.

⁵¹ In this light, the fragment of the play cited from Stobaeus (fr. 402 *TrGF*) which urges that a prosperous man should have as many wives as possible so that he can get rid of bad ones has a deeply ironic impact, whoever actually delivered the lines and in whatever context.

⁵² Plut. *De sera numinis vindicta* 556a (cited above), Philostr. *Vita Apollonii* 7.5. The play is one of only two for which Plutarch refers to performances, the other being *Cresphontes* (*De esu carnium* II 998de); it may be significant that that play, like *Ino*, was centered on kin-killing and recognition.

⁵³ See Finglass 2014, 77-9.

⁵⁴ Hor. *AP* 123 *sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino*. Cf. Webster 1967, 98, for whom the description 'suits the oppressed Ino of this story'; contrast the malevolent Ino of the Phrixus plays. The 'sufferings of Ino' ('Ινοῦς ἄχνη) were proverbial (Zenobius 4.38), and this too may have been a result of our drama.

⁵⁵ The other unlucky iota-plays are *Ixion* and *Hippolytus Kalyptomenos*.

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